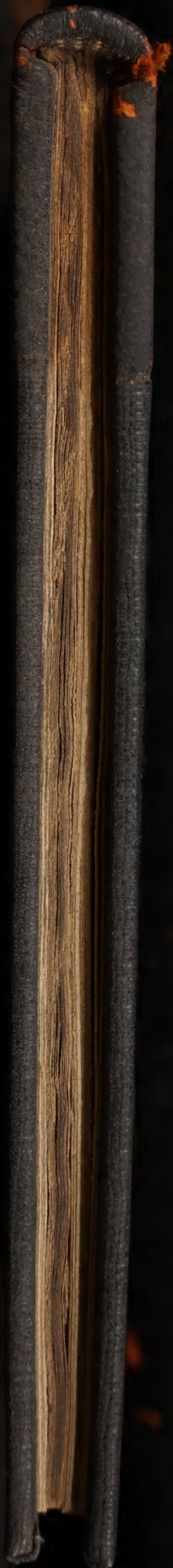


HANSON — WASHINGTON SOCIETY ORATION — BALTIMORE 1811

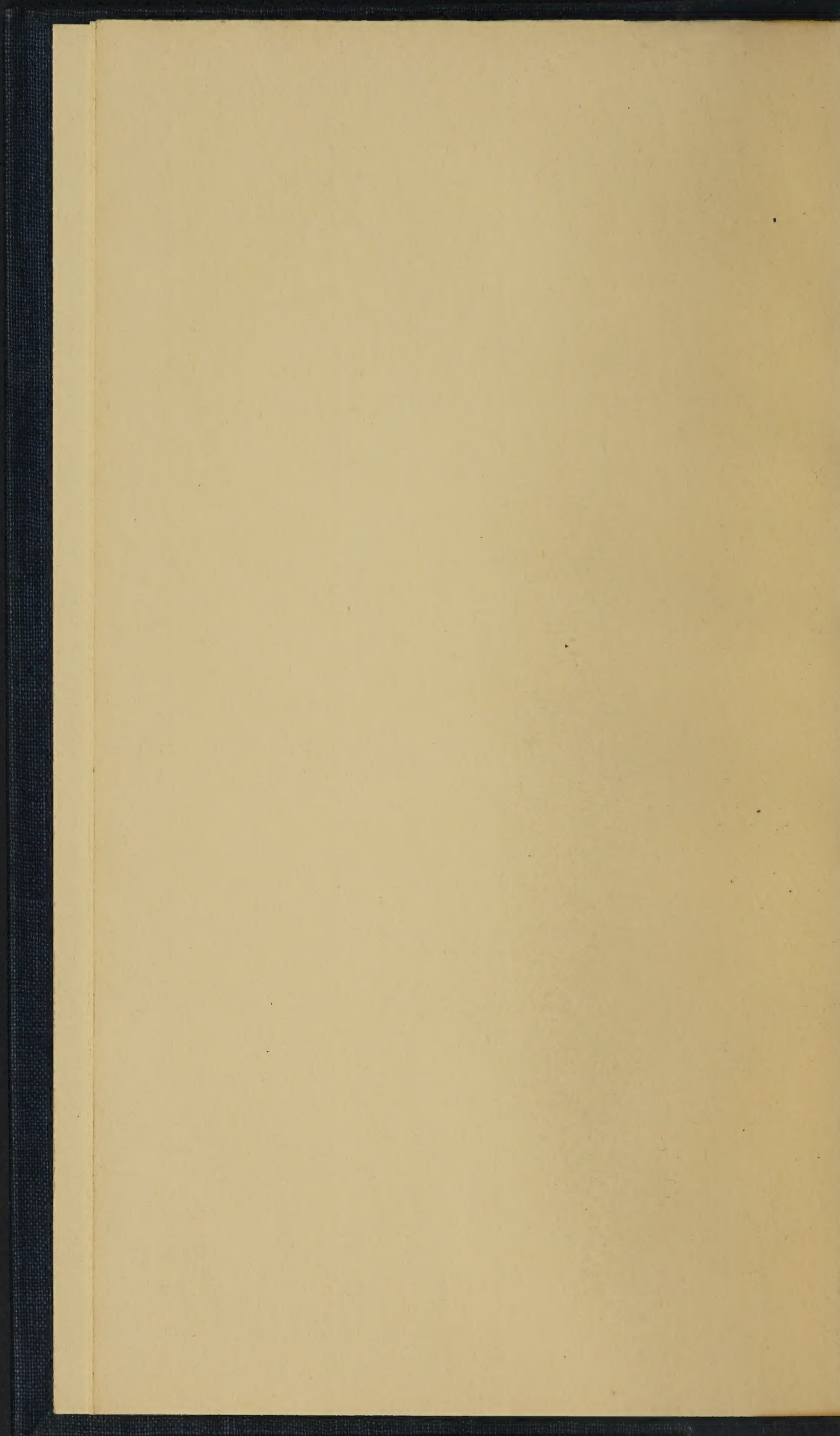








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ORATION

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

WASHINGTON SOCIETY

OF MARYLAND,

ON THE TWENTY-SECOND FEBRUARY, 1811.

.....
BY CHARLES W. HANSON, ESQ.
.....

BALTIMORE :
Printed by John L. Cook.

1811.

REVISED

AMERICAN & FOREIGN

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MY FRIENDS AND FELLOW-COUNTRYMEN,

The Washington Society of Maryland has confided to me the honourable and impressive distinction of addressing you on this day. The character and examples of him whose name this institution bears, whose principles it aims to disseminate, and whose luminous virtues it looks upon with a steadfast eye, are so essentially present in whatever view the American people can be regarded, that the sad but sublime office is of itself imposed of calling to remembrance (I trust to none the sensation will be hateful) him “whom armies followed and a people loved.”

Need an inhabitant of this land pause from any fear that he lives among men so degenerate and ungrateful, to whom it might be irksome to be reminded of their debt to such a benefactor? Can the sons of America hesitate to record the fame of Washington—to join and swell the mighty theme? They have not to festoon honours on a *Philosopher* without virtue, a *Statesman* without energy, or the *Hero* divested of human conscience. They are not called upon to depress one estimable feeling. Every manly and sincere sentiment of the heart must be raised up to behold him. And they who hold this day solemn and distinguished, with bosoms expanded by admiration for the valour and wisdom, love for the virtue, and grief for the illustrious dead, whilst in “the fondest and most anxious recollections” they gather round *that* assembled majesty of all that could elevate human dignity, will not refuse the moisture of a generous tear, or the warmth of a manly sigh to cherish the laurels (not yet consumed by the heat of malevolence, or withered by neglect) of the chief who diffused the first national lustre upon their country. To kneel with filial and ritual solemnity and affection at the grave, (I had liked to have

said the tomb) of a father, whose instructions bettered their hearts, and filled their understandings with truth. To do honors of gratitude and veneration to a departed ruler, who administered their government upon maxims of profound and beneficent policy.

It is not because our chief was good, wise, brave or glorious, that we deplore his loss and the abandonment of his principles. He was all this and more. These high attributes were chastened and tempered by the combined emotions of virtue and reason, "flowing in one blended stream from the opposite sources of the head and heart." But shall any ask why our grief bears such an emphasis, we are not constrained to deal in general phrase, or indefinite encomium. We can identify the achievements of merits so conspicuous. And we should offer some tribute, if it is only by recounting them, which should tell why every lover of his country should thus be penetrated. We should indeed my countrymen for our own sakes, and the oftener we contemplate Washington and his works, we shall be the wiser politicians and the better men. A recurrence to such a life cannot fail to purify moral and religious reflections, to quicken every generous impulse of the soul, to touch and warm the pure and genuine sensibility of patriotism.

In whatever stage of his career we consider him, if we cannot content ourselves with "his greatest eulogy to pronounce his name," but must dwell upon and talk over his memory, to say no man ever acted upon such a theatre, none was ever cast in such a character, none ever so well atchieved his part, is not to overflow the deep wide measure of his lofty and extended fame.

We behold him in his first public exploit, like his country, whose soul and emblem he seemed to be, young, uncultivated, but full of strength and natural resource, traversing alone the immense wastes of western wilderness, the bearer of remonstrance to the verge of the then discovered continent. The successful negotiator to French instigations of savage cruelty upon our defenceless frontiers.

In the boy the ambassador of peace ! we see him encountering all the perils and terrors of a desert, if not before inaccessible to human enterprise, and human intrepidity, because infested by an ambushed perfidious and relentless enemy, who in their frightful incursions, butchered his wretched and helpless fellow countrymen. We see him resolved to save or perish with them, incapable, to use his own words, of resisting the moving petitions of the men and the supplicating tears of the women. In the midst of death and torture, in all the variety and enormity of their terrors, unappalled by the burning stake or the reeking scalping knife, though " his warm blood the wolf should lap 'ere life be parted," pursuing with an undaunted unprecedented perseverance the deliverance of his countrymen. Performing the object of an unessayed, most arduous, and perilous duty with a constancy unshaken, with despatch almost incredible, a success not looked for, a fidelity peculiar to all his undertakings, an ardour, energy, vigour and patient endurance both of body and mind, which, marked him for the admiration of the world, and above all drew down upon his youthful head, the thanks and blessings of the aged, the tears and prayers of mothers, with their tender infants, whom he thus dared save from the merciless ravages of Indian warfare. It was not uncommon for whole families, driven by their terrors from their homes, to perish by famine in the wilderness to which they had fled for concealment, to escape such complicated wretchedness.

This signal and most uncommon enterprise, justly gained him the public love and public confidence. We now find him in his native state, applying all his influence, wisdom, and intuitive experience (which to a mind endowed with such vast natural possessions is the concomitant of no line,) with undiminished, untiring and undivided labour to the touching and important subject of his attention, appealing by every motive of human action, to interest, to justice, to fear and compassion, for the urgent and benign policy of granting to the western inhabitants, not then many miles distant, some perma-

ment protection, that the morning might not break upon mangled corpses, smoaking from the feverish blood of those whose wounds and anguish had compelled them to rest on the preceding night.

Succeeding in these humane and noble efforts to engage the serious and earnest attention of government to these abuses of humanity; we again behold him, in the discharge of his trusts in this behalf, after the most masterly military manœuvres, with a few undisciplined provincials conducting a powerful & well appointed regular force to the accomplishment of his great design. Leading it through forests, mountains and morasses, which he alone had explored and understood, until by the fatal neglect of his knowledge and his counsel, it would have sustained not only total discomfiture, but an unsparing massacre, but that he proved the deliverer. 'Tis to his youthful deed in arms on Braddock's fields I allude, my countrymen.

He is there seen, with all the gallantry and fire of youth to bid danger defiance, and to expose himself to perils which he could not hope to escape. He is every where conspicuous in courage and conduct, undismayed by carnage and confusion whilst the battle raged, and when the day is irretrievably lost, with veteran coolness and discipline, he is seen effecting a retreat, which saved the brave remnant of his fellow soldiers from captivity & the grave. Nor could this defeat, total, bloody and disastrous as it was, vanquish the youthful Washington. It could not subdue his virtuous ardour in the purpose of rescuing so many of his fellow creatures from calamities, which pity was exhausted in commiserating. No: the Big Meadows, Braddock's Fields, and the reduction of Fort de Quesne, are monuments to his youthful fame, which no earthly mandate can demolish, and will forever tell, that, the bloody torrents of a treacherous foe could then, no more arrest the progress of the youthful warrior's benevolence, till peace and security were granted to the objects of his care, than should now the frowns and threats of a Satannic monster immure our citizens in dungeons, burn and confiscate their property, and

spurn our national rights. These early achievements are rendered important, as having given occasion to Washington to manifest "a frame of Adamant and a soul of fire," which drew the attention and united the confidence of all towards him as best fitted for events in their subsequent great developement. But their reward, brilliant and solid as they were, all honours, powers, distinctions and emolument were incapable to commensurate. The plaudits of his own heart were all he ever coveted to multiply.

And retiring to the quiet of domestic life, we contemplate him discharging its relations in a manner the most beneficent and exemplary. We see him engaged in Agricultural employments—in the cultivation of the soil his fore-fathers had tilled. As a kind, benificent, unassuming neighbour. In the pursuits of industry, temperance and religion. In the study and acquirement of knowledge for himself and his country. Invested with no military honours, clothed with no civil authority. Surrounded by no aristocratic and lordly parade, aiming only at the splendour of goodness, and the munificence of charity. In calm content fulfilling the occupations of an unambitious, undistinguished, benevolent private gentleman, with dignity & utility for nearly *twenty years*, during a period of life when youthful imagination is most visited by the phantoms of glory's delusions, and ambition's renown. When even ordinary minds are most prone to overlook the limits by which they are inherently circumscribed. Not of that restless, factious and perturbed spirit which exults only in turmoil, and aspires "to ride upon the tempest and direct the storm." Not of that feverish-hearted and distempered emulation, which engendering nothing but projects of ambition, is too apt to be mistaken for the faults of true genius, and thence to be erroneously imputed, as incurable diseases to minds of the highest order;—but endued with that mild, tranquil energy, which never courts occasion to display its might, but when justly incited, never fails to put forth its irresistible prowess.—And when we next behold him in the public eye, it is not until common

danger had united the good and brave for common safety.

In the convention of '74, he is foremost in counsel among a body of men, than which Greece or Rome in the proudest days of antiquity, more effective, more illustrious, in honor, wisdom and eloquence, never saw assembled. Delegated by their anxious and expecting countrymen, to act in a crisis which involved in its deliberations, the greatest consequences ever presented to the consideration of mankind, and failing in the most touching, able and penetrating remonstrances to awake British justice in behalf of their oppressed and desponding country, we behold them (as the necessity now became apparent, to decide the great question) assured by the presence of Washington, assuming an attitude the most responsible and perilous, that men ever imposed upon themselves. With a generous and premeditated temerity they rush beyond a point, to which there could be no return. All are captivated by their heroic example of self devotedness, allured by the splendor of the deed and staked upon its fate.

It is now my countrymen, if in a day so long, so bright, it be not impossible to designate meridian; if in a life like Washington's its highest point can be marked on its ascendent, it is now as commander in chief of all the armies, raised in the assertion of your freedom, that we behold him entering his zenith of human glory, and virtuous greatness. But I have arrived at a crisis in our history, too signal and too near this generation, for any to be ignorant of, and of which I have now the honor of beholding some of the surviving few who might exclaim with the desolate Æneas, tho' not yet exiled from their ruined and enslaved country, but driven collectively from her councils with emotions (long may they last!) far different indeed, and in the pride of liberty and self commendation so nearly allied to it, "all that I saw and part of which I was." Happily it is not my task, to give interest to any event which in the nature of things it is possible to forget. I have not to approach any period, which can fade away from me-

mory and from which it would not be the most extravagant departure, to wring my feeble conception, and exhaust the superlative of any language I could employ, by attempting to give a colouring, artificial and unnatural, to matters great enough to refuse all ornament, too illustrious for any such adventitious refulgence, and reflecting a light upon the most humble object in their sphere. It would be indeed to adorn the most precious brilliants from the mines of nature, by encumbering them with the textures of art.

And if it did not seem even a want of gallantry in spirit and thought, not to follow Washington to the plains of Monmouth, Trenton and York, these scenes need only be adverted to as mere sparkling gems, set in the immortal wreath of moral grandeur. For it was not in performing what may be termed mere dexterities of martial exploit, to display the banners of a victory for which a single life might be too dear a price, except to fan the devastating passions, or bloat the pomp of the conqueror, that it would be just to appreciate such a chief. Tho' Washington was not insensible to fame, tho' his genius was made to soar, and all was of a lofty and towering heights: tho' Washington *had* a soul of fire, it was not made to consume, but to give life and light. Tho' he was not an ambitious man, yet, he had a *great ambition*; not an ambition to be great as conceived by the diminutive soul to be the power of being raised up upon the heads of his fellow men, but an ambition to set his country upon the most blissful seat among the nations of the world.

For in all his great and important acts, he seems ever to have considered, that the tenure by which he held of Heaven such vast intellectual domain, involved the express condition, that he was made for his country and not his country for him. Discerning from the commencement the real resources of America, and the true policy of conducting a war, dependent upon them, he resolved upon a course from which nothing could turn him, and which as it differed from so many recommended by officers of experience, it is reasonable to infer,

was the only one experience would have approved. Firm in his purpose, when maturely adopted, resisting persuasions, which would have allured other men, never yielding to the suggestions of those around him who panted for a name in arms, always attentive to the opinions of his countrymen, but disdaining insinuations, clamours and reproaches, to a delicate and brave mind the most odious and wounding, he surmounted a height, beyond the reach of accusations for coldness, want of action and of heroism, which were alleged against him,

“Whose soul impelled him to the embattled plain.”

He adhered, unmoved by censure, with a fortitude, patience and vigour, in themselves unequalled in combination, to a system calculated on his own great scale, (not exactly the warfare of Scipio or of Fabius) which proved him the consummate soldier, and manifested to Frederick the Great of Prussia the fitness of addressing him “from the oldest General in Europe to the greatest General in the World.”—No consideration, no matter by whom presented or advocated, no matter by what importunity, could swerve him from the plan so justly conceived by his genius, and irreversibly decreed the best by his judgment. Never for any inadequate object to hazard the cause of a people.

Not manœuvring like a rebel treading cautiously within the quibbles of the law, as if preparing for defence, or an arraignment for high treason in the court of King's Bench, but like a chief at the head of an army of Freemen, regarding life and all worth, only to be preserved for glorious independence, and contemned as best fitted for fetters in subjection. We see him, not looking towards events over which he could have no control, which no where touched his measures, or could be relevant to their merits: Not to disperse suspicions or opinions which the enemy might have no small share in disseminating—Not to reclaim the disaffected in principle or satisfy any that he did not merit censure, but waiting till his political system, his able

movements and well concerted devices, should bring about occasions to strike blows, which should every where be felt, and by affording openings to reiterate their force, to derange the whole system of the enemy, and alter the appearance of the contest in all its attitudes and positions.

He thus assured the hopes of those pledged to the event, inspired new life and joy in those devoted to the cause, enlivened the drooping hopes of many, whom nothing but the celebrations of a triumph could save from sinking to despondency. He engaged all hearts and hands in the awful struggle, compelled them without violence to be for him or against him. It was thus he secured the consummation of his wishes, by attaining objects for which such actions were designed, and which manifested him to the wonder of the world, fertile in expedient, rapid and inevitable in execution, as bright in action, as profound in policy, and as the "sun renowned."

Such was it when Washington took the field. Our war was thus made to assume the character of a revolution, and not that of a rebellion. Great in adversity, equally calm when courted by prosperity, never partaking of the despondency which so often darkened the hopes of all, his rays were always visible through the thick gloom that impended upon the land, threatening to obscure forever the majesty of a people roused for such rights and headed by such a leader.

It was by qualities such as these that he preserved the nation true to itself. That he taught them, that for such a people to be free, the united will was the abundant force. It was by discountenancing the most distant approach of the belief that (if Providence did not will it) whilst the people could be preserved untainted, any earthly power could prevail against them. It was by inculcating a firm belief, that though their armies might be beaten and disbanded, many of their beloved chiefs slain or captive, in every spot of ground on this quarter of the world, not actually covered with hostile legions, standards should be erected by their survivors, around which all who were impressed with

such emotions, and enobled by such examples, might rally and display their colours for eternal battle.

It was by stamping such a character on the contest, by imparting such invincible feelings to the people, by obliterating all remembrance of colonial allegiance, by effacing every trace of difference between subjection and utter extinction, that he confounded and disconcerted the enemy. That their commanders and rulers, stood dismayed, abashed and rebuked by the superiority of a genius above their comprehension; and by the steadfastness of opposition and virtue in a people, "who snuffed the approach of tyranny in every tainted breeze;" who appeared thus to be stayed and supported alone by the hand of heaven. It was by means such as these my countrymen, that *he* swayed and led the judgment, that he gained the affections, and that he commanded the deference of his countrymen. It was for such a leader that, resting their faith upon him as preternaturally endowed, armies, and the people with motives the most hallowed and enlightened, would have followed him to the western boundaries of the continent. They would have gloried with Washington to have encamped upon the Big Meadows. They would have renewed with tenfold vengeance the scenes of Braddock's Fields. They would have delighted to rear the tree of liberty, upon the very spot where sprouted the first scion of Washington's fame. They would with every circumstance of the most desperate and determined valour, have disputed every inch of the soil. They would have repelled and driven back their invaders, to this side the western ridges, and like Burke's "Hyder Ally, hanging on the declivity of the mountain, compounding all their materials, of fury, havoc and desolation into one black cloud, have burst and poured down their contents, upon the authors of all their evils, idly and stupidly gazing upon the menacing meteors." *But Washington and those around him never fled to the mountains.* Such was then the discernment of the American public, and such the power, courage and manliness of him in whom they put their trust, that such an ex-

tremity became no where necessary. In the most discouraging and unpromising circumstances, *he* maintained at least an imposing attitude of resistance. Keeping up in the most dismal and foreboding times an army formed of materials the most averse to discipline and command. A soldiery enduring hardships and privations, which it was almost too much to exact of human frailty to sustain. Virtually enlisted to serve only during will, suffering miseries almost incredible to be voluntarily borne. Hungry, naked, and to be tracked in their march by the blood of their feet, the commander in chief alone, could have kept them around him, by his unwearied attention to their wants, by the eloquence of truth urged to every good principle of their natures, by the dignity of a mien and presence, surpassing the majesty of royalty, which the purple of the imperial mantle, or the glitter of diadems never could confer, which withered the arm of mutiny and communicated a personal awe and venerating fear, wherever it appeared, from which every individual shrunk in self abasement, shamed by the reflections how insignificant he, and all he could have at issue must be, in comparison with the forfeit Washington had pledged. All who beheld the man, resolved instead of quitting his side, to exult in the honour of labouring in a common cause with him. To vie with each other in devotedness to his person, and in every effort to attach themselves by the most indissoluble rivets to his fortunes.

“ They rush where heroes war the foremost place to claim,
 “ The first in danger as the first in fame.”

Such should ever be our conduct, my friends, in combating an adversary superior in numbers and in discipline. From such causes Washington was enabled to sustain his army, and not abandon the struggle for his country. It was thus he *prevailed*, having not only to counteract, and contend against an army, always exceeding his, in size, appointment, equipment and every circumstance of war; but to perform the difficult and

delicate task of mediating between injured and offended troops, and the higher authority of a congress, which had become discordant in views and opinions—weak, and distracted, as a government. But overcoming all difficulties, which from these complicated causes were formidable enough to subdue all others, in the first period of the conflict, knowing no relaxation of his cares, labouring in the pursuit of no selfish propensity, practising every instance of self denial and self severity, deriving no efficient aid from the legitimate authority of government, checked, controuled, mortified and embarrassed in all his operations, after eight of the most arduous years of a war, to be found in the biography of any personage, amidst a people worn out with the troubles and calamities of its duration, with an army faint and languid under its burthens, he triumphed in obtaining peace, and the acknowledgement of independence to these States.

Had the life of Washington here have terminated, in what age lived he who could be deemed his equal? But he lived on: otherwise my country, your sons might not now have been convened in the face of the world to do those honors to the first man of any æra in the august character of a nation's founder, but if daring to remember him, (for tyranny reaches even to opinion, it withers the heart and palsies the brain) they would have been reduced, like felons skulking to the secret caverns of mischief, to perform those affectionate and sorrowful rites.

“The thoughts of glories past and present shame
“A thousand griefs would waken at his name.”

But Washington had still much to do—as he alone could have drawn out a revolution from political dissensions, which so often threatened to degenerate into a mere treasonable rebellion, it was for him to prevent that revolution from falling into anarchy, from resulting only in the change of allegiance from one to another foreign potentate, instead of originating national establishments of peace and protection.

All these dangers presented themselves in the distracted state of a government, dependent on the unanimity of many jarring and jealous sovereignties, having no power to oppose their commencement, or suppress their malady at its crisis.

A people unsettled, without any distinct object in view, by turns sunk into doubts and fears, and elevated by hope! An army rioting in the joyous excess of dear-bought liberty; restless, because unemployed; having indisputable claims for remuneration and reward for services they had rendered and losses they had sustained, for perils and hardships so much greater than their proportion endured in the redemption of their country. Clamorous, and importunate to an Executive unable to discharge them, perfectly destitute of finance, and impotent to coerce justice from the country at large. A body of men in arms, instigated to pay themselves from the almost exhausted coffers of an ungrateful nation, whose existence they had paid for with their blood. Fomented into a mutiny most threatening and contagious, because inflamed by brave and brilliant talents. Exasperated into a turbulence of spirit and violence of design, which called for all the force and pathos of rhetoric from the Commander in Chief, to appease, which his voice, his presence, his language, his services were alone adequate to quell.

In circumstances like these, guided by the history of all previous example, almost all other men would have conceived that their own safety, and that of their country, forbade them to disband troops smarting with wounds and ingratitude, whose long residence in camps had impoverished their property and disqualified them from civil pursuits. Having contracted all the habits of idleness, profligacy and ferocity incident to continued cantonments, other men might have considered, or affected to consider, them as scorbutic eruptions on the body politic, which could not be hurried back through the channels of the system without corrupting the wholesome blood and endangering instant dissolution. And if Washington thus impressed, or not, in conformity to

all former precedent, having armies at his beck and an entire people accustomed to think every thing right because he was its author, had erected for himself a throne, or carved out the sceptre of an Emperor, would he not still have been foremost in the race of glory?

If Washington had retained all the power and greatness he had acquired for his country in trust, not expressed and scarcely implied, in what age of the history of human actions is his condemnation to be found? Could he ever have been less than the victorious warrior, the founder of the American nation, him on "whom God himself had seemed to fix his seal."....But

"All thou hast been, reflects less fame on thee,
"Than all thou hast *forborne* to be."

And surpassing every instance, in the range of living history, of real or fabled excellence, we may challenge all the legends of historic and poetic lore, to furnish a parallel, without this great original of human grandeur to pourtray from, for the glory of moderation, of self-denial, of forbearance, to such high temptative lure, in the simple uninflated fact, which no language can embellish, that Washington retired to Mount Vernon..... That after tranquilizing all classes of men, restoring efficiency to government, and returning that confidence to his countrymen which in the most eventful periods they had so propitiously bestowed upon him, the only instance in all his hours of trial, at which self preference ever appeared, was in surrendering his power. I am not afraid of being charged with extravagant eulogy. I am not colouring from imagination, I am drawing from the life. Before Washington lived there was no model of such perfect character. And we must again dwell for a moment upon the unexampled man in retirement, possessing no superior priviledges, but these derived from the highest of all prerogatives, the love of his countrymen engrafted in the heart.

In no respect varying his former domestic pursuits, but in occupying his vast and illuminated mind, his profound and discriminating genius in acquiring the

truest knowledge of civil government and civil polity, with a view of connecting together, under one common head, (the necessity of which all things conspired to demonstrate,) thirteen discordant sovereignties into one great Republic.

The result of his reflections, and of those who laboured in the same work, was that illustrious Convention at which he presided, and which after costing him and his friends infinite toil, to reconcile conflicting interests, and appease wrangling and acrimonious passions, gave to America the present form of government, and to the world the only instance on its records, of an entire people spontaneously subscribing to a surrender of rights upon a fair compact of equivalent, and adopting a government formed the freest in the world, upon the presumption of their continued good sense and virtue. Strong enough for protection, too weak only for the fatuity or guilt of those to whom I fear it has been fatally entrusted. Of this, Washington being called to the Presidency by the unanimous voice of his country, encounters once more all the troubled scenes of official responsibility. With reluctance unfeignedly poignant, he quits the chosen seats of his ancestors, from "which he parts with a prophetic sigh." He ascends the chair of state.... "on his right hand victory sat eagle eyed." In the new station of Chief Magistrate in such a government, throwing aside his aversion to the task, and intent only upon his duty, as was ever his conduct when resolved upon his part, he proceeds with vigour and judgment, with a firm and circumspect hand, to give action, tone and energy to all its parts.

The legislative and judicial departments are filled from among the best & ablest & most meritorious men in the whole community. Hamilton, Jay, Ames, Pickering, King, Morris, Ellsworth, Pinkney, Marshall.... I cannot name your Jeffersons and your Madisons, because I am recounting a roll of eminence and worth, on which such men were never marked as absent when their country called upon them, with firmness to assert her rights.

An administration is compleated, which for its resplendency, the harmony and rational beauty of its parts, resembled more a planetary system than any moral structure. An administration whose utility and provident wisdom, might have continued to this day, to give order, unanimity and peace, but that a baneful meteor of Jacobinism, like all comets, tangent and eccentric in its course, with a French party for its tail, had gleamed in horrid contact upon this hemisphere, and in its contortious and inverted evolutions had struck and jostled from their orbits, lights of the first magnitude, had deranged, broken and confounded the luminous uniformity.

But before this havoc could extend its desolation upon the virtue and understanding of the people, Washington had laid up a store of good, which has not even yet been exhausted by all the depredations it has suffered. He discerned, now as President of the United States, the best measures, not for a vassal, but a free state, as he had before adopted, those best befitting the prosecution of a war not an insurrection. Without descending to party topics, there are leading measures of his administration, so grand and important, and so instructive in themselves, as to give birth to mighty principles. That from his commercial regulations had issued a prosperity the most sanguine never hoped for, is as undeniable as the fact of his proclamation of neutrality, and presents the uncommon truth flowing from it, that there has lived a ruler perfect in theory as adroit in practice. Had Washington never been the saviour of his country; had he never led its armies or ruled its counsels; had he been as well versed in all commercial traffic, as if he had been engaged in all its meanders; had he foreseen future events, in expediency, and the consequent advantages of foresight, his measures could not have been exceeded. There was a theory in his mind, which gave to practice its lessons, and took back in reciprocity, truths of the first value. That was the genius of Washington in all its bearings.

His administration was fraught with all those distinctions, which mark the best governments. During it, contentment, industry, prosperity and national honor flourished, private violence was punished, public wrongs resented and redressed. Every class of the community was employed and enriched. An equitable burthen of taxation was imposed, not upon poverty, but upon wealth and prosperity, competent and willing not only to pay the price of its protection and continuance, but to refund disbursements anticipated, from the abundant sources, whose floodgates the national debt had been appropriated to open. Funds were created to pay the nation's creditors. The great consummation of public and private faith was every where established. The government was the patron of the people, and the people protected the government. It endeared itself to the nation by its justice. It raised and extended the people's views by its magnanimity. It strengthened and affirmed their honesty, by its own inflexible adherence to *truth*, and all its engagements. It gave tone to private honour, by public faith. By never being false to the world, the world was from policy faithful to it, and its own conscious rectitude respected itself. In regard to other nations, the guileless innocence of childhood's bargain was the basis of its treaties, but their violation was followed by the sense action and vigour of manhood. In his policy abroad, Washington was impartial, firm, vigilant, mild and pacific, but he could be warlike.

His policy at home, his intercourse with his cabinet and the other co-ordinate branches of government, was frank open and ingenuous. In it there was nothing wily, nothing diminutive, nothing unbecoming Washington.

Accessible to all who could constitutionally approach him as counsellors, he encouraged their sentiments and advice, he received and weighed well their opinions and information. Swayed by no favoritism, he took nothing upon trust. Actuated by no prejudice, nothing was rejected from hate. Imposed upon by no superiority, for in whom could it be found? Awed by no

boldness, for in what was he ever timid? no measure which was not his own, or adopted by him, which did not consult national honor and interest, was ever recommended or sanctioned by his name.

Possessing the most piercing sagacity, the most keen, observant and penetrating eye, in addition to the experience he had derived from the varied scenes he had personally taken a part in, (the lot of few in elevated stations) he mastered that great study, so important to all who are the appointed rulers and commanders of mankind.—He had a knowledge of himself and of man, by which he perceived not only his own defects, but the qualifications which individuals were endued with, the parts which each could best act, and how in different situations each would conduct; but he attained an ascendancy which governed all around him, enabled him to make the talents of others useful, and to appropriate their application to the accomplishment of the purposes he desired. In these respects, all others were tributary to him, and he, like the ocean, receiving on its vast expanse the streams of all the great waters of the earth, hastening to empty their treasures into the bosom of the profound and mighty deep. He perceived at once, that a government constituted like ours, must essentially rest on public opinion. And by making faith and truth its basis, that reliance on his wisdom and implicit belief in his purity, which I would emphatically condense by calling public opinion, was entirely his. With it he could have drawn forth the resources of his country, the real might of the people, their patience and self-denial, the wealth of the nation. The widow's mite and the misers treasure would have been emptied at his feet. And in all measures of real doubt, such was the general character of his system, that his decision settled the public belief. And without prying into the privacy of his cabinet, filled with no fears, distrusts or suspicions, but trusting to his lights we fearlessly followed, neither bewildered, entangled or betrayed; “all partial evil was univarsal good.”

Such was Washington the hero of freedom ; such was he as the President of the United States.

And now, my friends, let us behold the extent of the desolation, which threatens to surround us. From the highest national honour and the truest dignity, we have sunk into debasement. And a few ages hence, those who read your history will not believe its continuation to be that of the same people—it will be imagined, (so rapid is our transition) that some monstrous chasm has not been filled upon our records. It will settle down into tradition, that our repositories of knowledge have been contaminated, to deface, break and destroy the order and beauty of the narrative.

The late and present administrations are easily portrayed. We need only recur to that of Washington, for the purpose of reversing all we know of his. Instead of its exact operations, the harmony of its parts, the system, and the regularity, which entitles me to call it a political Orrery, we have the manufactured honor, the machinations of state politic contrivances, from the jangling of a rickety mechanism, “ grating harshly the din of “ Smithery.”

Has not the condition of every valuable class of men depreciated, step by step, until we have become insensibly reduced to a situation, from which, only eight years ago, every honest heart would have revolted ? Is the nation now happy ? Is it contented and prosperous ? Does it enjoy the quiet of peace, the benefits of commerce ? We are not encouraged at home, we are not protected abroad. Our commerce is preyed upon every where ; here our pursuits are languishing and useless. No *surplus revenue* is applied towards the diffusion of learning, to the encouragement of arts, to the promotion of agriculture and manufactures, to improvements of the interior of the Country, to the building and mantling of the navy, to any preparations of warlike defence.—Has public and private wealth increased ? Has not public and private credit diminished ? nay, I might almost say, perished ? Has not a low intrigue, and not an open manly conduct prevailed amongst the highest function-

aries? Has the nation been furnished with examples of liberal policy, of magnanimity, of an indignant vindication of right and honour, or cowed and degraded by base submission; demoralized by low artifice? Do the people look up with that confidence and veneration in the wisdom and energy which should be felt for the rulers of their own choice? Who are those rulers?.... Do the people rest their hopes upon them? Have they that respect for themselves, that deference & attachment for each other, that high-minded subordination which implies their own superiority, which entitles them to the support of public opinion, and more especially to the consideration of those who differ from them in political sentiment? Where are the muscles and sinews of war, where the might of the soldiers of the revolution, who have escaped the havoc of the grave, and the still greater havoc of intolerant power? Not rolling in the car of official pageantry. No trappings, no insignia of the legion of honour can confer what Nature has withheld---can create that solemn sentiment of faith and awe, which a single ray from the native glory of Washington never failed to animate. Amid the calamities of war and the robes of court are but the mere trumpery of stage effect "upon a poor player."

Towards foreign nations, has our government been firm, impartial, reasonable, just? It has so long manifested a persevering devotion, a compliance and subserviency, a spaniel-like fawning, always ready to fondle, at the first smile or snap of the fingers of a ferocious and capricious master, that the Emperor of France, no longer deigns to conceal his "conscious ascendancy;" no longer deigns even to intrigue with such men.... *no longer deigns to treat with America as free and powerful*, but after using every thing within his immediate reach, as if it already belonged to him, by the "divine right of conquest," says neither more nor less, than *go fetch*, and dictates, as to a trembling menial, in what manner the rest shall be borne to his feet. And with the greatest faithfulness, it has been carried.

Whilst all these blows, buffets and contempts, are received with the most philosophic humility, by "men

devoid of honor, of polity, of energy, of just political views" as if indeed, they were "more humble than the dependant parliament of Jamaica," as if indeed, "your charter of Independence was in obedience too, already cancelled," whilst all this is acquiesced in from one belligerent, resentment must be reeked upon the other, with hostility in exact proportion to all this meanness, with a premeditated and inveterate rancour & enmity, which would not permit it to be friendly, if all we ask could be conceded. Administration has endeavoured by every means it could devise, to wound and exasperate England into anger, till she shall be provoked into some signal and unequivocal outrage, which shall afford occasion to relinquish secret and mysterious understandings, and openly to form the closest alliance at the heels of France.

An alliance which if it could enable us to do more mischief to Great Britain than we have already wasted much of our own strength in attempting, could have no other tendency, than to put a close to the existence of a people struggling "against a world in arms," for the religion of their God and the liberty of their country: to banish from Europe every vestige of a freeman, to drench our own plains in the bravest blood of your sons, to reduce your sisters, your mothers, your daughters, your wives to be worse than menials, prostituted to shame and death, in America appended a base province to France, enslaved by our own madness & corruption or by that apathetic indifference, that political leprosy, that narcotic spell, by which the hemlock of Napoleon has deadened the keen sense of national feeling, and induced that fatal slumber, in which he has enslaved almost every realm in the ancient world. But you are yet freemen, and there is a purity in the air (God preserve it from pollution) that blows over a land of liberty, which none but traitors can breathe without feeling every nerve braced to meet death, rather than save one drop of blood, to fret and fester in the fetters of a conqueror.

And yet every nation in Europe whose governments were timid and weak; whose governors were just such men as ours; whose policy and conduct are just

the same ; who have yielded to the insults and threats of France ; who have obeyed the Emperor's injunctions, who have joined him in his war upon the commerce of the world ; who have ruined trade at home ; who have rendered the yeomanry idle, and the merchant bankrupt ; who have *but yesterday* pulled down one of the best public institutions any people ever had, who have produced a general individual embarrasment among the best citizens, sufficient to abstract their attention from the dearest concerns of their country. Rulers upon whom Napoleon has impressed a love and fear, an infatuated admiration, which have enabled him to fascinate and devote " a party in the bosom and at the head of every country," accessible to his insinuating friends, his intrigues, and his corruptions.

Where is the liberty of Switzerland, of Holland, of Sweden, of Denmark, of Russia, of the Hanseatic Towns, of all the Germanic Powers, of Austria, of Prussia, nations once independent as France, many of them breathing a spirit of freedom France never breathed, possessing the highest minded tone of national feelings ? paralyzed by his tyranny, poisoned by the contamination of his *touch*, charmed into his fangs, devoured, torn to pieces or " rotten" around him.

All whose coalitions for mutual protection, which in other times, would have continued for centuries he boasts to have scattered and broken up, in a " few months." In what respect differ, the feeling, the prejudices, the means and the wishes, of our government and that of these degraded kingdoms, and subverted Republics ? In what our prospects ? Are not Americans of all parties reduced to the confession, that a chief hope for safety, rests on an ocean, not on which a gallant navy is suffered to wave the American flag in glory, but an ocean which we have been ordered to abandon, and to shrink from the "*freedom of whose seas we aim to conquer for Napoleon.*"

Towards Spain the only remaining nation on the continent of Europe, that remains true in her integrity to herself, which dares meet the keen encounter of the

destroyer's eye, which dares not be withered by the frowns of despotism, and whose trade, proximity and proffered friendship is important to us, it is the will of the Emperor, that we shall act the most ignoble part.

Should any imagine, that all we have to complain of, is to be ascribed to the present extraordinary condition of the world, it is well known, that during the strife of Europe, our growth has strengthened beyond all past example. That this extraordinary prosperity, growing out of an unusual state of things may have been checked by extraordinary events cannot be denied, but that all its advantages should be forever sacrificed, can never be conceded.

Had Washington lived and presided, he would with firmness have shaped his course to the times we live in; he would have considered the situation of the world; he would have comprehended it; he would have made the just allowance for its tumults; he would not have demanded, that whilst others were exposed to the pelt-ing of the storm, that they should bare themselves to its destruction, and yield their last shred to us, who were not only protected from its fury, but profited by its continuance, because its inconvenience might in some shape be felt. We should to this moment have enjoyed his great proclamation of neutrality. Had he governed, there would have been no decrees, no embargoes, no orders in council. And we should not, if in retirement, have found him, the concealed weapon within the grasp of the Tyrant; treacherously devoted and sending messengers to his country's enemy, and whilst avoiding official responsibility, exercising personal influence to effect his country's ruin.—An influence which *he* calculated the hypocrisy of a resignation would better secure, than too long a continuance in power, until he, to whom he is already obedient, should have sway here to give it back and protect him and his successors forever in their hold of it.

I am done with these men—to gain their present height, alas! too many were obliged to descend too low, ever again to reach the elevation of virtue.

But let us quit this scene so sickening to the heart, and return once more to our beloved Washington, who retired from his station of President again to Mount Vernon, after imparting tone, dignity and impulse to the government, and placing its relations on the most solid and prosperous condition. Here, with delight, we might contemplate him in the pursuits he loved; but that the disturber of the world reached his tranquility, and at the head of our armies Washington is called to repel the havoc of French invasion. After organizing military preparations (in conjunction with his former Secretary of War,* who dwells among us, and who was selected by the then administration to communicate in person with him upon the subject of his acceptance of the commission of Commander in Chief,) and designating Hamilton, Knox, Pinkney, Lee, and Howard, and a few others, to the highest and most conspicuous stations, as those whom he loved to honor for past services and present worth, the enemy relinquishes its hostile intentions, and our Washington departed from among us.

In the trials of death, he declared "he was dying but was not afraid to die." What could he have to fear? To die is the lot of man—to live as he had done, the command of God? *He was a perfect man.* To say more, would be profane—less would not be just. But as such a brief implies human infirmity, should any murmur that he had strong passions, the strength and beauty of the thought expressed by him, who could so well tell the attributes of a great head and a great heart, that "they were the breeze which impelled the ship along,†" must forever hush them. If he had faults, their weight pressed only on himself, as his country never felt them, I know them not.

He could not have to fear the Historians. He could not fear the justice of his country. Much less, could he have thought, that after a few years, the "snow should be his winding sheet." He could not have anticipated that to save his remains from the bare earth, to raise a

* James M'Henry.

† Mr. Harper's Oration to the Washington Society of Alexandria, delivered February 22d, 1810.

receptacle for his bones, a monument to his deeds, resort *must* be had to the *vices* of the People. Thanks are due to the projector of the Lottery, such zeal is noble and exemplary, good and manly. Washington's memory must, may the work long survive, all recollection of the cause and manner of its completion. But should the scheme fail, it will be reserved to the Historian of a future day to lighten the disgrace of this filial impiety, should this land be overrun by some fierce conqueror, to have the greater ignominy noted down, that

"Sterne as he was he yet revered the dead,"

and gave to Washington what his country had refused. How will the blood of shame mantle in the cheek of your descendants, should any of them be ordered to shew the tomb of Washington! To recount its history, to tell that not their free fathers, but he whose chains they courted, had erected the pile, as if to mock their sons, to make the fetters by which their limbs were manacled, cut and gall them to the heart.

Did Washington leave none behind him, who, if they could not have created, might have preserved the paradise he had made of his country? Did one grave covet all, who were his compeers in war and counsellors in peace? Are they not now at the capitol? Are they not now in the conclaves of the nation? Need I endure the pain of answering? But yet, my countrymen, there are such men; whose fidelity and effective wisdom have stood tests and ordeals, of which no people ever before, were allowed to avail themselves. So much use to make trial of. Men who were his friends, whom he loved and trusted, who admired, who understood, and instilled into themselves all they could of him. Who were always soaring around him, delighted-like Eagles, to gaze upon the Sun.

Such was the genius & character of the founder of this Empire. But august and virtuous as the good and wise of all nations pronounced him, he could not escape calumny, "whose edge is sharper than the sword, whose tongue outvenoms all the worms of Nile, rides on the posting

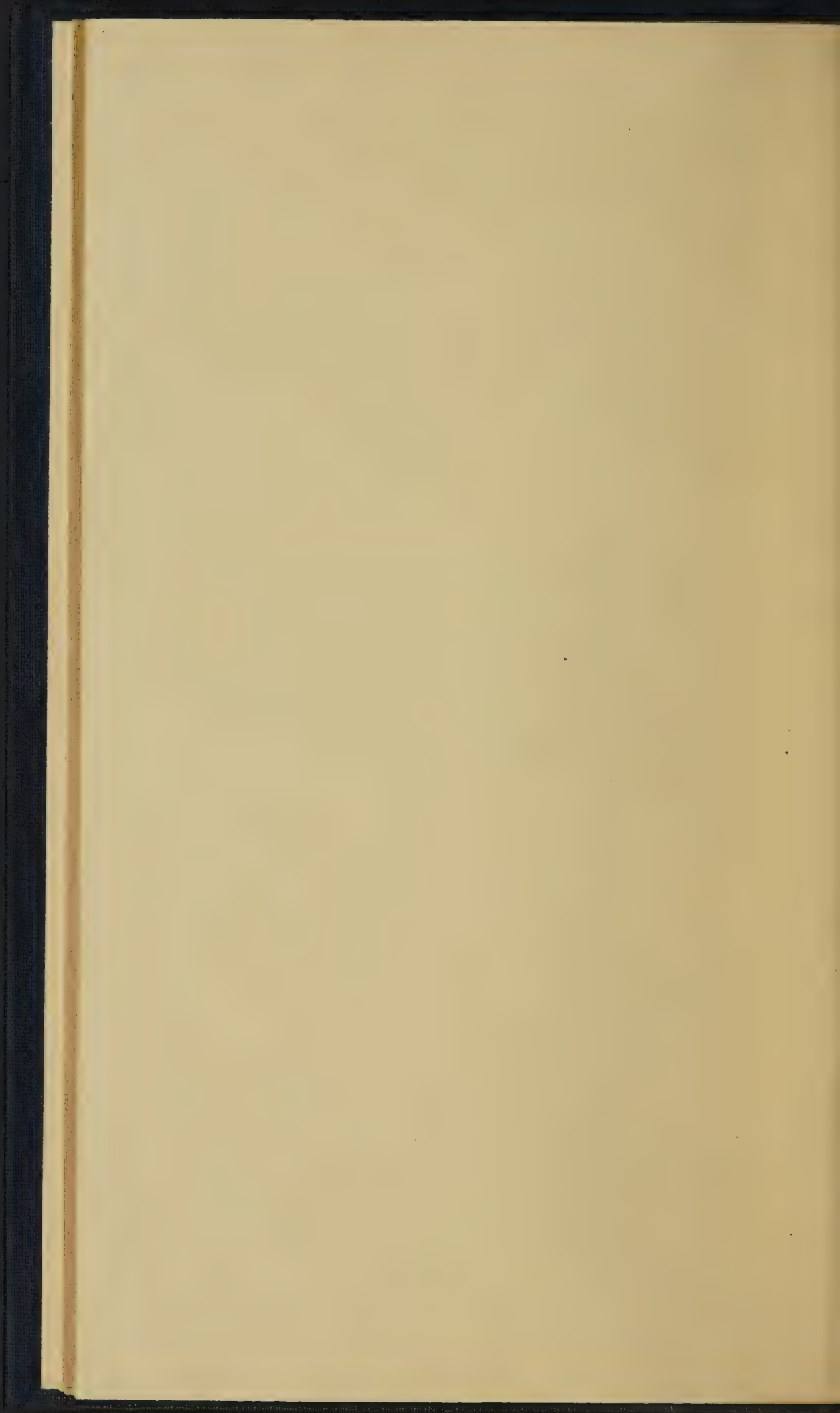
winds, and doth belie all corners of the world" In a letter addressed to the late President, he discovered his inquietude at the acrimonious slanders which were levelled at his fame; to use his own words, in such exaggerated and indecent terms, as could scarce be applied to a "Nero, a notorious defaulter, or a common pick-pocket." Little did he imagine, that he was revealing his complaints to the very man, who has paid the murderers of character, to undermine and blast his public and private reputation. But accompany me, says an elegant writer, to the graves of Mount Vernon. "Behold this same friend at the tomb of Washington; see him approach the hallowed spot, surrounded by spectators; he kneels before the sacred dust; sobs choak his utterance; he clasps his hands in pious resignation to the will of Heaven, and with tears streaming from his eyes, he retires in silence, amidst the blessings of those around him, whose sympathy he had thus beguiled. This practical trope was performed in the sight of Mount Vernon House, and the sorrowful relic of Washington, beheld it; in a mixture of grief & indignation, she declared she "could forgive him all but that." With recollections thus awakened, who will wonder at the black and gloomy sequel, which it has been a painful duty to describe, when it is known that this mock idolater and perfidious friend of Washington, now governs in secret our suffering country !!

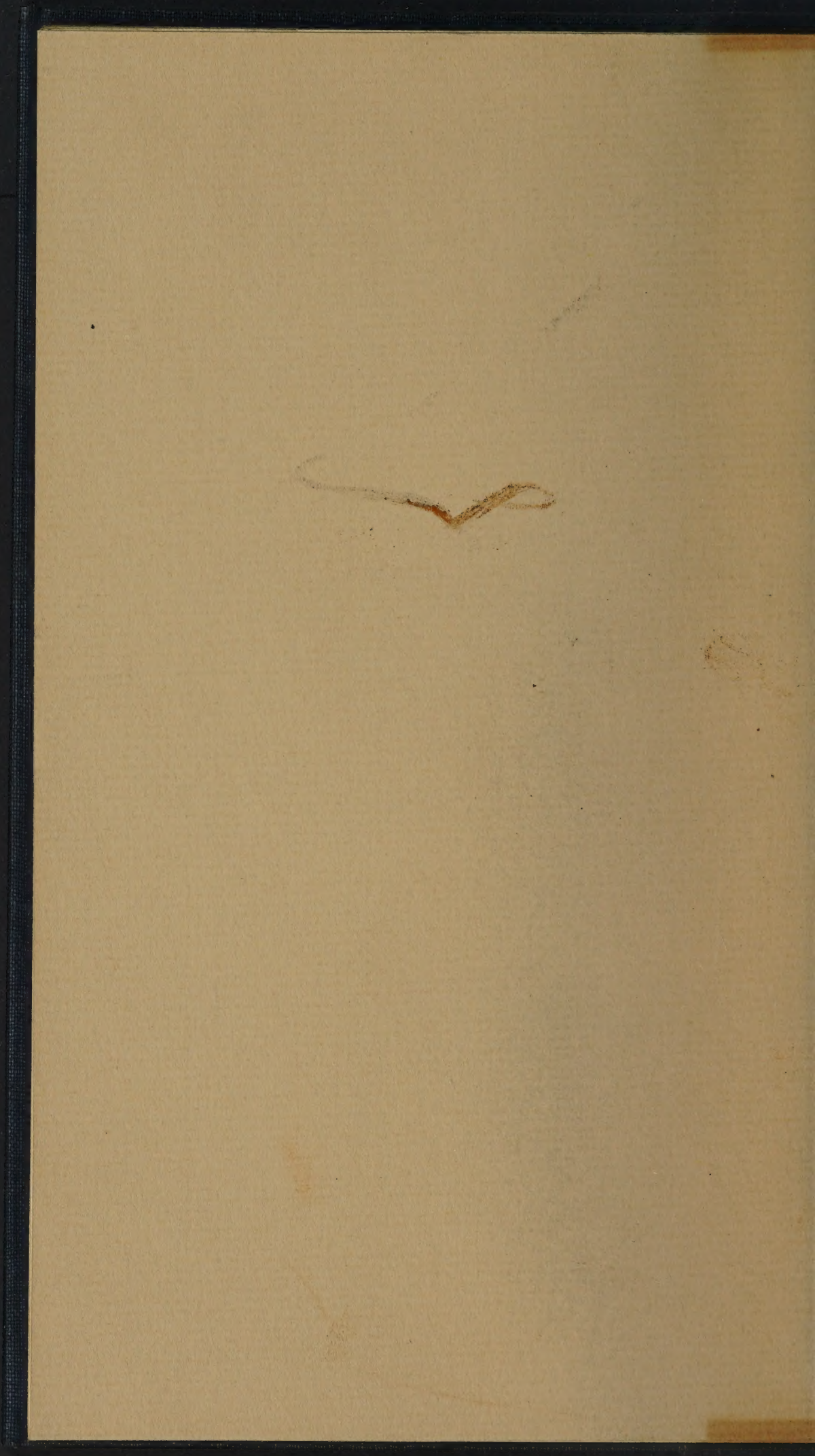
ERRATA.

In page 5, sixth line from bottom, for "line" read *time*.

In page 6, sixth line from bottom, for "torrents," read *torments*.

In page 12, second line from top, for "colours," read *columns*.





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